

# Richard's Things



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The miles were draining away. They were down to single figures when the traffic began to slow and thicken ahead of her. A new section of road was being constructed. She had driven with practised caution. Now she stopped behind a Volvo wagon and eased her hands from the wheel. The wiper on the back window of the Volvo had cleaned a swathe in the caked dust. In spite of herself she smiled. They had first seen a wiper on a back window when they were in Italy she and Richard on their way to Paestum. A Lancia Flaminia. They had been to see the villas at Ravello: eight years in June. They had laughed. The new road was to be dual carriageway. Yellow levellers trundled over the site on fat wheels. Behind them Constable trees wore their early green. A young man in a tartan shirt and cap posed with a red flag. The landscape shimmered as if smoke were clearing. Ahead of Kate to her right where the road would bend on a new axis stood a large oak; its branches spiked the morning from a dozen angles. There was no one near it. The young man with the flag turned to the line of motorists and nodded. The oak disintegrated. The thick tree shuddered and burst open. Branches hung in the air for a second as if on the wing with the hundreds of birds which jostled the sky and then collapsed. The clap of the charge followed the execution.

The ground shook.<br><br>"

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